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North Vietnam: Party First Secretary Le Duan, despite his ranking as the top party official among Ho Chi Minh's successors, has not played any significant public role since Ho's funeral last September.

Most of the top leadership turned up in public in late December for the celebration of three important Communist anniversaries, but not Le Duan. Six of the nine surviving members of the Lao Dong Party politburo established at the last party congress in 1960 made at least one appearance. The two who did not show in addition to Le Duan are out of the country.

National Assembly chairman Truong Chinh, Premier Pham Van Dong, and Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap all played their usual prominent roles. Giap received the lion's share of attention during the army's 25th anniversary celebrations and produced several major statements for the occasion.

Truong Chinh, who ranks just after Le Duan in the current party lineup, has been the regime's most prominent personality in terms of public exposure since Ho's death. In contrast, Le Duan has gone virtually unreported in North Vietnam's press and radio, his activities having been noted only twice in three months. It is possible that Le Duan is preoccupied with important behind-the-scenes party chores that may preclude appearances or statements.

Appearances of individuals are not in themselves conclusive evidence about the shape of the leadership. Better clues may be forthcoming in the near future. The 40th anniversary of the Lao Dong Party takes place on 3 February and the regime has indicated that it intends to mark the occasion in a big way.

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West Germany - Eastern Europe: Bonn is continuing to work toward the settlement of differences with East European capitals.

In a public statement, Chancellor Brandt has acknowledged that the Poles have proposed an opening of political talks between the two countries in the second half of January. [redacted]

[redacted] the talks will probably be conducted at the undersecretary level, at least during the initial stages.

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The highly demanding East German approach to negotiations presents Bonn officials with considerable difficulties, but in spite of growing pessimism in the press and in some official circles, Brandt takes the view that the proposed hard-line East German treaty is only a "draft." He has indicated that counterproposals will be offered [redacted]

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[redacted] Brandt will expound the West German position in his state of the nation speech on 14 January.

Bonn is informing other governments that the East German draft treaty "as such" is unacceptable, and that by publicizing its demands, Pankow appears to be trying to make propaganda to hinder West German detente efforts. Nevertheless, the Foreign Ministry considers it noteworthy that the East German Government has not set preconditions for talks with Bonn. [redacted]

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Sudan: Antiregime activity continues as the Numayri government, still confident of its position, struggles to establish an Arab identity.

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[redacted] Sudanese authorities, [redacted] have recently conducted a wave of political arrests and have dismissed 15 Khartoum university lecturers. The regime has also given wide publicity to its security measures and seems genuinely concerned by these signs of opposition. There is reported to be an air of disquiet in Khartoum, and the resignation of 185 university faculty members in protest of the earlier firings may cause additional political uncertainty.

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Meanwhile, the government is pursuing its primary foreign policy goal of upgrading its commitment to the Arab cause in the struggle with Israel. Delegations have been sent to the recent Arab summit and to other meetings. Government leaders have also had frequent contact with Egyptian President Nasir, and seem determined to create some direct tie with Egypt and Libya. At the same time, Sudanese relations with the West have continued to deteriorate. [redacted]

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Pakistan: The resumption of full political activity tomorrow could bring with it renewed violence.

Pakistanis have not enjoyed complete political freedom since Ayub Khan seized control in 1958. The current restrictions, however, have been in effect only since March 1969, when Yahya Khan assumed power and declared martial law following five months of civil unrest. Although Yahya has allowed private political activity to encourage politicians to sort out their differences, public meetings have been prohibited.

In a long-awaited speech last November, Yahya announced that full political activity would be permitted as of 1 January 1970 in order to prepare for the election of a constituent assembly next October. Last week, the regime canceled the regulation banning public gatherings and issued a new order outlining rules of conduct for political activity. The order warns that violence will not be tolerated and that troublemakers will be treated harshly.

Despite such precautions, security conditions are shaky at best, particularly in turbulent East Pakistan. Emotions will run high as politicians begin campaigning and excitable throngs gather. Bitter rivalries between competing groups will surface and might erupt into serious incidents. Widespread violence in East Pakistan could severely strain the capabilities of the security forces.

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Tunisia: Recent changes in government and party assignments give Premier Bahi Ladgham a team he can rely on.

Many of the new appointments, which were announced last weekend, have been rumored for some time. Nevertheless, the fact that they were made while President Bourguiba was still convalescing in France, but presumably with his advance approval, seems to underline his confidence in Ladgham as premier and acting chief of state.

The most significant move is the ouster from the cabinet of the brother-in-law of Ahmed ben Salah, the discredited former economic czar. This leaves only one Ben Salah partisan still in the government hierarchy. In addition, the most prominent of the remaining pro - Ben Salah governors was removed. The departure of these two men strengthens the anti - Ben Salah image of both the government and the party.

Meanwhile, the President's in-laws have strengthened their political position by the appointment of a cousin of the President's wife as director of the ruling Destourian Socialist Party.

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Bulgaria: A sizable number of the African students now studying in Bulgaria may be expelled from the country for participating in demonstrations in front of Communist Party headquarters.

The black students have been agitated in recent weeks, ostensibly as an outgrowth of barroom brawls between Arab and African students. The root of the unrest, however, is the resentment of the Africans over Bulgarian termination of some scholarships and repeated racial slurs they claim they are forced to endure. Reportedly there have been several clashes in the student area but so far the authorities are handling the situation with kid gloves. The students probably hope that their demonstrations will receive publicity in the Western press.

The present unrest seems more serious than similar episodes in 1963-64, when 120 of 370 African students left the country after a series of incidents involving racial discrimination against them. Following this exodus the regime did allow the formation of an African students' organization in Sofia to look after student affairs.

Nevertheless, the students apparently still have their long-standing grievances: racial discrimination, a serious language barrier, political indoctrination, and attempts by the government to use them for propaganda purposes. The regime probably will attempt to control the students short of expulsion in hope of avoiding the embarrassment this would bring. The students, however, may decide to leave the country on their own in protest of their mistreatment.

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Ethiopia: The authorities have so far prevented any extension of the violence that resulted from the clash on Monday between university students and troops. No further disturbances have been reported, and all schools in Addis Ababa have been closed for an indefinite period. The government appears convinced that the killing of the student union president which sparked the clash was the work of hard-core radicals seeking to provoke a student-government crisis. Some radical student leaders have already been arrested and others are being sought.

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Philippines: Manila, which is preoccupied with a deepening financial crisis, may suggest an extended delay in the renegotiation of economic and defense agreements with the US. President Marcos has recently indicated a desire to postpone formal negotiations until perhaps 1971. Marcos may want to avoid any controversial negotiations with the US until such a time as his country's economic situation has improved. He would then be in a stronger bargaining position.

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UN: Tomorrow's annual change in the membership of the Security Council is not expected to have any substantial effect on the voting lineup in the Council on issues of importance to the US. Poland, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Nicaragua, and Syria--elected to two-year terms by the 24th General Assembly--will replace Hungary, Algeria, Senegal, Paraguay, and Pakistan, respectively. Among the new members, Poland, Burundi, and Syria would probably vote to unseat Taiwan in the event its credentials should be challenged in the Council. The first meeting of 1970 would be the most critical one for any such move, and countries friendly to Taiwan have carefully worked out contingency plans designed to avoid having the issue come to a vote.

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

The United States Intelligence Board on 30 December 1969 approved the following national intelligence estimate:

NIE 36.5-69 "Short-Term Prospects for Libya" [redacted]

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